CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A telephony system for interconnecting a plurality of communication devices and a resource center, the system comprising:

an active channel for connecting at least two of the communication devices; and

a resource channel for connecting and disconnecting the resource center to at least one of the communication devices of the active channel in response to a resource-activation command from one of the communication devices.

2.   The system of claim **1** wherein the communication devices of the active channel include an origination device;

the resource channel being connected between the origination device to the resource center prior to the active channel being connected between the origination device and another one of the communication devices.

3.   The system of claim **2** further comprising memory for storing resource data indicative of the resource channel, wherein:

the resource memory data are accessed when the resource-activation command is provided.

4. A communication system for interconnecting a plurality of communication devices including an origination device utilized by a caller and a plurality of destination devices utilized by users, the system comprising:

a resource center including a computer and a database of connection data; and

a softswitch for hosting a gateway that is remotely placed with respect to the resource center, the softswitch for:

connecting a resource channel between the origination device and the resource center;

connecting an active channel between the origination device and a destination device;

disconnecting the resource channel; and

reconnecting the resource channel.

5. The system of claim 4 wherein the softswitch disconnects the active channel prior to reconnecting the resource channel.

6. The system of claim 4 wherein the softswitch maintains the active channel when reconnecting the resource channel.

7. The system of claim 4 further comprising a second softswitch for hosting a gateway associated with the resource center.

8. The system of claim 4 wherein the softswitch reconnects the resource channel based on resource-channel data indicative of the resource channel.

9. The system of claim 8 wherein the softswitch stores the resource-channel data.

10. The system of claim 4 wherein the softswitch reconnects the resource channel when the caller sends a resource activation command with the origination device.

11. The system of claim **10** wherein the origination device includes a keypad with a plurality of keys;

the resource activation command being generated by actuating at least one of the keys of the keypad.

12. The system of claim **4** wherein the resource center includes a speech server for interacting with the caller on the resource channel.

13. The system of claim **4** wherein the resource center includes an application server for enabling the user to cause one of a plurality of applications to be initiated.

14. The system of claim **13** wherein the plurality of applications includes an extranet grammar including a set of user-defined voice commands.

15. The system of claim **13** wherein the plurality of applications includes an intranet grammar including a set of password-protected voice commands.

16. The system of claim **15** wherein the set of voice command includes a CALL command for causing the resource center to initiate a telephone call on an active channel between the origination device and one of the destination devices.

17. The system of claim **15** wherein the set of voice command includes a SEND command for causing the resource center to send a digital item to one of the destination devices.

18. The system of claim **15** wherein the digital item includes a document.

19. The system of claim **15** wherein the digital item includes a fax.

20. The system of claim **15** wherein the digital item includes an e-mail.

21. The system of claim **15** wherein the digital item includes an invitation.

22.   A softswitch for hosting a gateway in a communications system including a resource center and a plurality of communication devices, the resource center including an application server and a database, the communication devices including an origination device utilized by a caller and a plurality of destination devices utilized by users, the softswitch comprising a software application for:

connecting a resource channel between the origination device and the resource center;

connecting an active channel between the origination device and a destination device;

disconnecting the resource channel; and

reconnecting the resource channel upon a resource-activation command being received by the gateway from one of the communication devices.

23.   A method for hosting a gateway in a communications system including a resource center and a plurality of communication devices, the resource center including an application server and a database, the communication devices including an origination device utilized by a caller and a plurality of destination devices utilized by users, the method comprising:

connecting a resource channel between the origination device and the resource center;

connecting an active channel between the origination device and a destination device;

disconnecting the resource channel; and

reconnecting the resource channel upon a resource-activation command being received by the gateway from one of the communication devices.